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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2637  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000128

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [AJ](#)  
SUBJECT: THE ELECTION MONITORING CENTER RECEIVES  
REGISTRATION AFTER FIVE-YEAR STRUGGLE

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF JOAN POLASCHIK PER 1.4(B,D).

¶1. (SBU) On February 12, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) approved the Election Monitoring Center's (EMC's) registration application. This was the EMC's seventh registration application; the NGO previously had applied for registration six times over the past five years. The MOJ denied each of the first six applications for technical reasons which should not have had a bearing on the registration decision. According to the EMC, the MOJ imposed no conditions on its registration, and offered the explanation that the delay had been due to technical reasons.

¶2. (SBU) The EMC is the largest and most experienced domestic election monitoring organization in Azerbaijan, and receives USG assistance via the National Democratic Institute, a USAID implementing partner in Azerbaijan, and occasionally through the Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. Although the NGO has monitored every election in Azerbaijan since 2000 - presidential, parliamentary, and municipal - while it remained unregistered, the organization was unable to file official complaints of electoral fraud as noted by its monitors. The EMC's now-registered status means that the organization will be able to file complaints in the October presidential election.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: We view the MOJ's decision to register the EMC as positive, and likely a result of USG intervention, as we have raised this issue with the GOAJ for many years, on many levels, including in our bilateral democracy dialogue. We plan to recognize the GOAJ's positive step in public statements in Baku, and urge the Department to consider opportunities to also publicly recognize this positive step. We believe such positive reinforcement will help encourage the GOAJ to take other steps to improve the election environment in the run-up to Azerbaijan's October presidential election.  
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